Census Bureau Small Business Pulse Survey

Experimental Surveys to Address Data Needs During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Small Business Pulse Survey (SBPS)

high frequency data about the challenges small businesses are facing due to COVID-19

What is the SBPS?

What are we collecting?

What is the goal?

What is the schedule?

Collaboration Partners & Methodology

EXPERIMENTAL DATA

SBPS key facts

About the Survey

Goal

The Small Business Pulse Survey was designed to measure the effects of the pandemic on businesses overall as well as on aspects of their operations and finances, leveraging existing infrastructure and producing high frequency geographic and industry detail.

Timeline for SBPS Data Collection

- Phase 1: April 26 through June 25, 2020
- Phase 2: August 9 through October 10, 2020

Partners

- Small Business Administration
- Federal Reserve Board of Governors
- International Trade Administration
- Minority Business Development Administration

Survey Content: Phase 1

Overall Effect

Overall effect of the pandemic on the business with 5-bin response ranging from Large negative effect to Large positive effect.

Operations questions

- Revenue
- Change in number of employees & employee hours
- Temporary closures

Challenges questions

- Pivot to new goods or services
- Pivot to curbside/carry-out/delivery
- Supply chain disruptions

Finance questions

- Cash on hand
- loan or other payment defaults,
- requests for assistance receipt of assistance

Outlook

- Expectations and outlook

Survey Content: Phase 2

Operations questions

Additional questions:

- Rehiring of employees
- Change in hours worked from home
- Change in use of online platforms

Challenges questions

Dropped two 'pivot' questions.
Additional questions:

- Factors that impact business's capacity
- Change in business's capacity
- Future needs

Finance questions

Additional response options for assistance questions:

- Fed's Main Street Lending Program
- IRS's tax deferral, credits

Outlook

Additional response options for expectations:

- Returned to normal
- Business permanently closed

Methodology

Sampling Frame

- Single-location businesses with 1-499 employees and $1000+ revenue with an email address

- ~1 million small businesses in target population for SBPS

- Representative of 5.6 million small businesses in U.S.

- Ability to link to Census Bureau business data infrastructure

Platform: Centurion

- Census Bureau in-house Internet collection instrument

- eBlast system

- Economic programs database for processing

Contact Strategy: Email only

- Weekly emails on Sunday

- Follow-up emails on Wednesday

- High voluntary response rate averaging over 25%

- Conversion rate averaging over 35%

How to access the data

Data Frequency

- Data are release weekly on Thursdays at 10 am EST

- Available through interactive visualization and downloadable files

- Website: https://portal.census.gov/pulse/data

- COVID-19 Data Hub: https://covid19.census.gov/

Data Detail

- Geography: U.S., State, Top 50 MSA's by population
- Industry: North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Sector
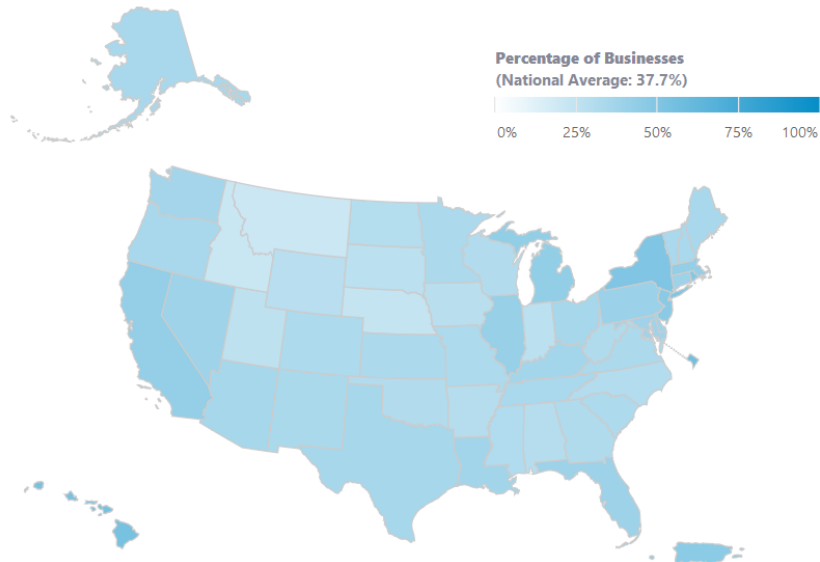
SBPS Visualization Demo
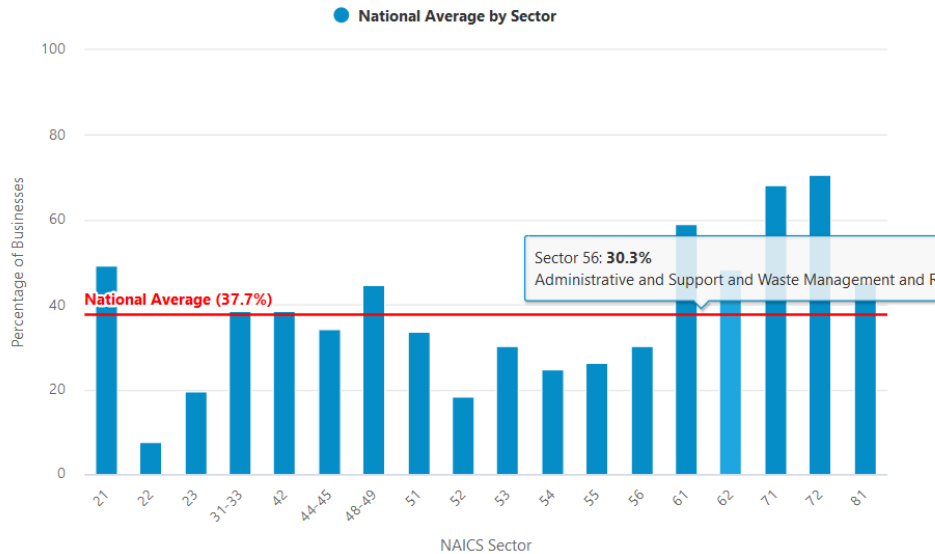
Pulse Survey – Future Plans

- Potential for leveraging this new rapid response capability to meet future data needs, particularly when measurement of rapid dramatic social and/or economic changes.

- The agile approach taken to deploy the Pulse Surveys further enables the Census Bureau to mature this capability, tailoring response to emergent information needs,

- A national or sub-national event that disrupts daily life and demands immediate, objective information to support effective response.

SBPS in the News

- **Washington Post:**
  - https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/05/14/federal-reserve-census-data-coronavirus-survey/

- **Wall Street Journal:**
  - https://www.wsj.com/articles/coronavirus-drives-75-of-small-businesses-to-seek-federal-aid-11589476452

- **Bloomberg**
  - https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-06-15/small-business-needs-more-federal-help-not-less

SBPS Links

- **SBPS Main page**: https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/small-business-pulse-survey.html

- **SBPS Data Tool** - https://census.gov/businesspulsedata
  - Click View Results
  - Click 'Help' tab

- **SBPS Survey Respondent overview**: https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/small-business-pulse-survey/take-survey.html

- **About the Census Bureau's Experimental Data Series**: https://www.census.gov/content/census/en/data/experimental-data-products.html

SBPS FAQ and Emails

Respondent Questions Email Econ.pulse@census.gov

Respondent FAQs https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/small-business-pulse-survey/take-survey/faq.html

Data Questions Email Econ.pulse.data@census.gov

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Questions?